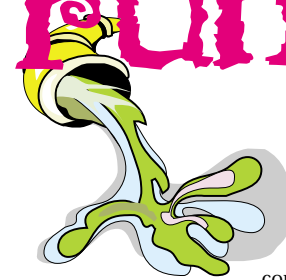


# Fun Facts from DEQ



DEQ recently sponsored Beach Sweep 2000 in Louisiana in conjunction with an

international effort. The annual Cleanup provides inspiration to hundreds of thousands of people who mobilize along our waterways and beaches for the annual event on the third Saturday in September. Since 1986, the Cleanup has grown from 2,800 volunteers on the coast of Texas to more than 500,000 volunteers in 55 US states and territories and more than 90 countries.

The International Coastal Cleanup is a global project of the Center for Marine Conservation (CMC) and is supported by an international network of environmental and civic organizations, government agencies, industries, and individuals that remove debris and collect valuable information on the amount and types of debris. This information serves to educate the public on marine debris issues and to encourage positive changes that will reduce debris in waterways and enhance aquatic environments.

The results of this year's Beach Sweep won't be available until next spring. But in 1999, more than 2,400 Louisiana volunteers collected 184,800 pounds of land-based debris. The top "Dirty Dozen" included:

- cigarette butts (11,496)
- plastic lids (6,697)
- plastic pieces (6,440)
- beverage cans (5,863)
- plastic beverage bottles (5,036)
- straws (4,784)
- foamed plastic pieces (4,174)
- plastic food bags and wrappers (4,149)
- glass beverage bottles (4,007)
- other plastic items (3,828)
- paper pieces (3,656)
- metal bottle caps (3,348)



Some of the more peculiar items found included a voodoo doll, a gum ball machine, linoleum flooring, a Christmas ornament, a seat belt and a lawnmower. A catfish was also found entangled in a six-pack holder.

Each year, plastics account for more than 50% of all marine debris. Plastic pellets and plastic bags are often mistaken for real food by marine animals. Ingested plastics can cause internal injury, intestinal blockage, and starvation. Thousands of seals, sea turtles, whales, and birds die every year from entanglement in monofilament fishing line, strapping bands, six-pack holders, and other plastic debris.

Statistics also show that more than 65 per-

cent of trash collected during Beach Sweep can be recycled. As trash is collected and bagged, it is also catalogued in an attempt to identify the origin of the trash, with the hope that it can eventually be stopped at the source.

Cigarette butts continue to be the number one form of litter, by number, found each year; drinking straws and styrofoam cups each make up more than six percent of the trash found along beaches and waterways. None of these items is biodegradable.

"The faces we see behind the trash during Beach Sweep are those of hard-working volunteers who take one day to make a difference," noted DEQ Secretary J. Dale Givens. "Over the long term, we would like to see those who litter realize that it takes only a little more effort to recycle or to put trash in a trash can instead of throwing it on the ground or in the water."

Beach cleanups help document the detrimental impacts of marine debris, as well as the enormity of the problem. Such information is a powerful, compelling tool for changing minds, changing behaviors that produce debris, and changing for the better the face of our planet. Plan now to participate in Beach Sweep 2001. Please contact DEQ at (225) 763-5403 to learn how you can help.



## New DEQ Homepage in Demand • [www.deq.state.la.us](http://www.deq.state.la.us)

DEQ's new and improved web site is a popular item of interest, with the number of hits climbing to 558,648 in the month of August. The reengineering of the Department brought about the need for a new and improved Internet site to inform the public about the workings and services of the agency. That site is here today! Just log on to [www.deq.state.la.us](http://www.deq.state.la.us).

DEQ's first web address appeared in 1994 after the Info Louisiana Task Force decided state agencies should have Internet access for the public. Joni DeVilbiss, a technical support supervisor who controls and maintains all of the servers for the agency, designed the first site to be used for DEQ.

In 1999, the reengineering of DEQ demanded an improved site. Joni says the new site

"gives a picture of what DEQ looks like now."

The new Internet site is organized in a functional way, much like the way the Department is structured. It has been designed so that it can be useful to school children as well as technical people. When putting the system together, Joni said, "We were trying really hard to look at the kind of questions we were receiving, either by mail, the Internet, or from telephone calls. We tried to go back and find a way to actively put those things out there so that people could get the information they needed without having to come through us. It saved us time and it saved them time." All necessary forms and information can currently be downloaded from the DEQ web site.

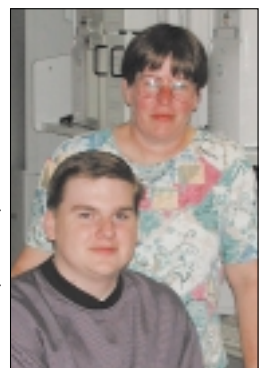
Recently, Jason Bonds has added his skills and talents as a Technical Support Specialist to assist Joni with the web duties. Together, they are striving to make DEQ's web site more dynamic by keeping the information current.

All content displayed on the DEQ homepage is chosen by the World Wide Web Task Force, which is composed of approximately 15 people from the various divisions. They meet monthly to think of new ideas or information that needs to be added. When the Task Force members submit information, Joni and Jason place, design, and arrange

the information in cyber space. She said, "Some web sites on the Internet are updated once a week; ours is updated everyday."

The DEQ web site receives a lot of traffic. At an average of 18,020 hits per day in the month of August, there is no doubt that the web site is in great demand. Joni said, "We've even had visitors to our web site from Belgium, Malaysia, Japan, and Indonesia." She said they sometimes receive e-mail messages in Spanish and French. Luckily, there are people in the Department that can translate these messages so a quick reply can be made.

Work on the site will never end because it is a system of constant improvements. The next items that will be added in the near future are a glossary of terms and a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section. If you have questions or suggestions about the new DEQ website, please send them by e-mail to: [webmaster@deq.state.la.us](mailto:webmaster@deq.state.la.us). We invite you to visit us often!



Jason Bonds and Joni DeVilbiss: DEQ Webmasters

Louisiana Environmental Update  
P. O. Box 82231  
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